P. H. Solomon

Trading Knives

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Chapter 1

Corgren blinked sweat and smoke from his eyes but a moment. It almost cost him an eye or his life. He rolled away at the last moment as his opponent gagged short on his cry of triumph.

The dagger's blade slashed through empty air and flashed in the arena's torch light.

Corgren rolled to his feet and backed away as he grinned and spread his arms wide with a slight mocking bow.

His opponent snarled and brushed shaggy hair from his eyes. Half of it matted on his sweaty brow.

With a squint like he tried to clear his vision again, Corgren baited his attacker.

The fellow lunged with a sloppy, slicing stab.

Corgren whirled away rather than counterattack. This time.

This bruiser of a man with pale hair and blue eyes that identified him as a Hartian, stood but a few finger-widths taller, but he launched his attacks slower, revealed his intent with a dip of his lead shoulder.

That tell just saved Corgren from a cut across his face or worse.

Their feet scuffed through sawdust and lingered in the musky air as they danced death. The crowd above them waved their betting scraps and shouted curses or encouragements at the circling combatants.

Some shouted for Corgren, "Kill that dog, hooknose! You got him, baldie." He sneered that some bet on him without knowing his name. Usually a mistake for a drunkard. But not this night.

With tilt of his head, Corgren stalked the Hartian in a circle.

"Corgren! Corgren!" His lips remained partially parted with a silent snarl. The smart ones knew him.

Corgren closed the gap and feinted twice as he measured his challenger's reaction. Much slower. He shook his head and circled back the opposite way. All Hartians bullied and

boasted, but few knew their business in the fighting ring. All bluster when faced with a quick Rokan like Corgren.

The other man spit at Corgren's feet, "Stupid Rokan! You'll lick my boots as you die!"

The Hartian, this Hacker, assumed a mere Rokan beneath him. Pride, A Hartian failing even if they possessed the upper hand with Corgren's native home.

Others in the crowd yelled for the other fighter, Corgren's enemy, in truth. "Hacker! Hacker!" Hacker flexed his free hand, then clenched to hammer Corgren with a stunning blow.

Sweat glistened on Hacker's bare chest in the flickering light.

Corgren ground his teeth, then sneered, "A stupid name for a stupid fighter. Your mother regrets the night she begat you."

Hacker's face reddened. He shouted and charged Corgren his blade slicing at his belly.

With a side-step, Corgren jabbed his knife-hand at Hacker's ear.

The other man staggered aside and squinted the eye on the same side as the punch.

With discipline, Corgren refrained from preening at the blow.

They feinted slicing attacks with their flashing daggers. They circled and Corgren let Hacker think he escaped something worse than a crack to his skull.

Hacker lunged at Corgren.

Corgren slipped away from his opponent's slash. He stabbed and cut counterstrokes, connecting to flesh at last. "I'll take your knife in trade for your life, son of a dog."

The cut trailed blood along Hacker's forearm as he held back a moment. "You're mine, Rokan cur!" His eyes narrowed and he flicked blood from his hand.

Corgren stood still, his snarl spreading into a grin. He had this oaf's measure now. He'd relish killing a preening Hartian on his own floor. Corgren spread his arms, inviting an attack.

The crowd howled jeers and cheers.

Hacker hesitated. The crowd hurled insults him until he clenched his jaw and charged.

Corgren dodged aside and grabbed Hacker's arm. He jammed the knife into his opponent's right shoulder and ripped it from the wound.

Hacker roared his pain.

Corgren snapped his head away from the counter-strike of the opposite fist.

Hacker withdrew, struggling with his grip on his dagger. Blood gushed over his arm.

Corgren circled like a predator. He'd take his time now. He chuckled. "Bleed, rat-faced

Hartian." He hated them all. He feinted a stab and leapt around to Hacker's free hand as it jabbed past his face. He sliced the left shoulder and arm and laughed at the answering scream. The glade left a deep cut.

The bloodied Hartian staggered close to Corgren, then slashed.

Corgren dodged and cut his opponent's face.

Hacker screamed again. He held his face, gasping, every breath punctuated with a grunt.

It wouldn't be long now. He read resignation in Hacker's eyes. He'd kill him now. Corgren lowered his hands.

The bloodied man's eyes narrowed. He gritted his teeth and charged, knife slashing.

Corgren dodged left of his wounded opponent. He flicked his knife at the exposed neck.

The blade gashed Hacker. The wounded Hartian fell to his knees, hands pressed useless to the fatal wound, his knife dropped in the dust and forgotten. Blood spurted across the ring. The crowd roared approval as Hacker collapsed and bled his life into the sawdust.

Corgren retrieved Hacker's blade as a trophy. He strutted around the ring, arms raised in the adulation. One less Hartian in the world to trouble his Rokan brethren. He quickly ducked out of the ring's door into rooms for the fighters. He sheathed the knives, found a bucket of water and cleaned blood from his torso and arms.

Paugren entered from another door, his nose only slightly less hooked than Corgren's. "Good work." Corgren's brother slapped him on the shoulder. "Any injuries? No? Good, I'll go collect the winnings."

Corgren caught the flash of the strange tattoo on his brother's inner forearm. It was a few months old and Paugren never explained where he'd gotten the matching pair on each forearm. Corgren splashed water in his face. "Careful. These dirty Hartians will cheat us if they can and attack us for no reason."

Paugren grinned. "I can handle this man and his hirelings. They think I've no stomach for them, but they don't know I've taught you everything."

Corgren found his shirt as his brother exited the room. Paugren was his teacher and sparring partner. He was good but Corgren was better. It took a firm stomach to manage Corgren's bouts as much as it took him to fight in the ring. It was tough but lucrative. Far better than being a laborer for Hartians.

Chapter 2

Corgren soon ducked out the side door as he heard men labor with Hacker's corpse, the dead man's booted feet scraping in the passageway leading from the pit. Corgren smirked. So much for licking his boots. He stood in the dark street with the Hart River but a stone's throw away. Moored trade and fishing boats bumped the wharves.

Minutes passed in the darkness as tension snatched at Corgren's neck. Paugren took too long. He turned to go in search of his brother. Someone moved in the shadows. He touched his knife-handle. "Who's there?"

A man in a cloak, face hidden in the darkness of his hood stepped closer, hands displayed in front of him. "Easy, I mean no harm."

Corgren glanced behind the stranger. He might not do him harm, but he might be the distraction for fellow ruffians to attack. No one else moved, but Corgren stood poised for action. "What do you want?"

The fellow stood straight and looked him in the eyes. "I saw you fight, well done. You are good - and lucky, friend."

Corgren sniffed. "Thanks, but there's no luck to it. And we're not friends."

The other man's teeth flashed with a smile in the wan streetlamps. "Perhaps not yet. But I can help you."

Corgren waved his hand with frown. "And want some money in return. Be gone before I try my luck on you."

The stranger shook his head. "I've come to make you an offer. Surely you wish to hear that you can be more than you are now?"

"We have enough."

"You think so? There are men who will make your bouts harder, demand more of your winnings as a cut. If you don't agree to their demands, they'll force it out of you or kill you."

He leaned back against the wall of the building and crossed his arms. "That's nothing new. But how do you know so much?" Paugren might be in trouble, but he'd find out what

that stranger really wanted and then help his brother.

The stranger shrugged. “They’re my men.”

Corgren surged from his spot, grabbed the other man and slammed him into the wall. “What have you done with Paugren? Who are you?” He pressed the knife at his throat.

The other man pried his grip loose and pushed the knifepoint away without effort. “My name is not spoken openly. Don’t worry, Paugren is fine - enjoying a woman at the moment, I think.”

Corgren took a step back and flexed his fingers. This man got loose from him so easily. He squinted at the stranger’s half-hidden face in the hood. “How do you know that? Or know about my brother?” But it’s just like Paugren.

The stranger sniffed. “She’s mine too.”

Corgren cocked his head and his eyebrows climbed. “Everyone is in your employ around here?”

The stranger chuckled. “It’s not so simple - and no. But I know who works for me and what they’re doing.”

He started to walk away. “I want none of what you’re selling, whoever you are.”

“Don’t be so sure.”

“What does that mean?” Corgren paused.

“I offer you much more than you have now or could ever gain fighting in the rings along this river. Money and power. Power, perhaps, to set the accounts straight between Hart and your own people in Rok.”

He crossed his arms. “What of that?”

The stranger straightened his cloak. “I saw your face. I know a grudge when I see one.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“My influence rises and will continue like a flood for years to come. I need good men like you to assist me with my work.”

Corgren rubbed the back of his neck. “I don’t know.” He needed to know more of this man’s intentions. He suspected it was largely illegal. “Sounds like you want me to serve you somehow.” But if he could move against Hart somehow… “I’ll have to think about it.”

The other man patted his shoulder. “A wise man thinks through his options.” He started to leave but turned back. “Just remember, service to me is far more rewarding than to Hart - or petty thieves. But know this; you won’t always be the fastest in the ring - or the most skilled, or the luckiest.” He turned into the shadows.

"How will I find you?"

"I'll find you when the time comes." The stranger faded into the night.

Corgren turned in the following silence and almost walked into an old man in a wide-brimmed hat. "Watch out, you drunk." He started past the stranger after a glance at his hands and the surrounding shadows. Paugren dawdled too long.

"You should watch out for that one. He's an old trickster and a danger at that." The oldster thrust a thumb over his shoulder where the stranger in the cloak had disappeared.

"What's that?" He whirled to the newcomer. "You know him? Who are you?"

"I know him alright, and he'll do you no favors. But I'm doing you one now with a warning about him. Trust me."

Corgren bent to look under the hat-brim. He couldn't quite see the old man's face, though he caught the glint of a blue eye in the streetlamps. "Well, I'll be the judge of that. But thanks for the warning." He strolled for the warehouse door to wait for Paugren.

"Lucinda wouldn't like him. She'd tell you that. She wouldn't trust him at all."

He froze, then whirled. The street was empty. "What did you say? Where'd you go?" He hadn't even heard footsteps. He couldn't know Lucinda. Could he? He didn't recognize the old man.

"What're you yelling at? Drunk already?" Paugren clambered out of the warehouse with a grin and a jug.

He scowled. "Just somebody bothering me. Where've you been?"

Paugren paused, narrowing his eyes at Corgren's tone. "Settling up, where else?"

"Took your time. Probably stopped to spend my hard-earned money on a woman."

Corgren's brother flinched, mouth agape, and then recovered himself with a shrug. "You can get one too."

He sniffed and shook his head. "Not one of those women, no matter how soft." He turned to go to their boat. "C'mon, let's go before a band of these rats come looking for our winnings."

Paugren tugged his clothing straight and followed with a slight jingle at his side. "What's wrong with you? Didn't the win satisfy you?"

"Nothing's wrong. Just come on. We've been here too long. We're going to get too much attention and we can't fight off a throng."

In a few minutes they cast off, gained the current and left the town in their wake. Paugren stretched and yawned once they were away. His sleeve slipped down, revealing the extent of

the tattoo by the lamp light.

"Why do you have that on your arm? People might think you serve the dragon of that old cult." He reached for his brother's arm.

Paugren flinched out of Corgren's reach and yanked his sleeve down. But a smile flicked on his face. "This? I like the dragon. It's my new symbol. Tough, I think."

He sat at the tiller. "I doubt the Hartians will like it much, let alone anyone else."

His brother shrugged and settled onto a heap of wares they were carrying down-river as extra income. He yawned again, lay back and stared at the stars.

Corgren shook his head. "You had too much wine with that woman. You're lucky she didn't rob you."

Paugren chuckled. "She wouldn't do that."

"How do you know that?"

"Trust me, she wouldn't"

Corgren wiped his mouth and furrowed his brow. That stranger said the woman served him. Did Paugren know that man and trust his servants? He scowled at his brother. Was there something Paugren had gotten them into, that he wasn't telling Corgren? There was more going on than trusting a whore and mysterious tattoos.

Corgren steered the riverboat as the stars twinkled. Lucinda liked starry nights like this. He frowned. She was dead at the hands of Hartian thugs, no sense mooning about her.

A large shadow crossed the sky. He blinked. "What was that?"

Paugren didn't answer. He lay asleep already and a soft snore escaped his lips.

Corgren scanned the sky again. Nothing there. He shrugged, glad to be drifting on the current. That stranger meant too much attention for him; best skip a few towns before they arranged anymore fights.

Though Corgren intended traveling farther, he later tied up along the bank. He was tired from his victory and Paugren never stirred from his slumber. He took the purse full of Hartian coin, checked the amount and hid it with their other stash under a loose board in the cabin that served as their shared room and storage.

Paugren was careless sometimes. More so lately. Corgren rubbed the back of his neck. If what that stranger said was true, they needed more care. He shrugged with a yawn. At least they were away from any ruffians for the night - and hopefully several days. He shook his head. Skipping several towns meant missing opportunities for hauls and fights in the rings. But taking care was best.

Corgren threw a blanket over Paugren and then stretched out under one himself near the bow. He drew his knife and lay with it at his side. Just in case. Rats were plentiful on the Hart River and not just Hartians. He yawned and gave into sleep.

Chapter 3

A hollow thud jostled Corgren. His eyes flicked open at the muttered curse. He turned his head. Another riverboat bobbed against their own.

Several figures slipped over the side. Corgren threw his blanket aside and leapt to his feet. He brandished his knife. "Be gone, or you'll feed fish tonight!"

"Easy there, friend." It was a Hartian by the accent. "We only want to talk."

"I've no need of talk with thieves in the dark."

In the dim light, the speaker spread his hands. Four others fanned out on either side. Two more men loomed in the other boat. "We've only come to collect the Ring-master's toll. You left before paying him your respects and his cut of your winnings."

"I don't know your master and owe him nothing. I've made no deal with him."

"He's just stretching into the rings along the river now. You win often so you'll bring him plenty. There's enough for you and him."

Corgren spit. "Hartian dogs! Away from this boat or I'll teach you lessons from the ring."

"Oh, so we're to trade knives? At him, boys!"

The four attackers shuffled toward Corgren on the deck. Knives flashed in the dim light.

Corgren feinted toward one. "Paugren! Get up!" He slashed an arm that entered his reach.

The injured attacker cursed him and then stabbed at Corgren. He stepped aside and slashed at the exposed neck. The ruffian gurgled and stumbled away, falling overboard.

The others slashed and stabbed.

Corgren danced aside. Two knives bit his arm. He slashed back. "Whores-sons! Paugren! Up you lout!"

The attackers feinted at Corgren now, surrounding him, forcing him against the cabin. Blood drenched his arm.

One attacker lunged.

Corgren grabbed the arm and whirled with him out of the midst of attackers. His foot caught on a coiled rope. He stabbed the ruffian in his hold as he fell. His head slammed into

the gunwale, and everything went blacker than night for a moment. Stars swam with deeper spots of darkness. Corgren blinked. A knife pricked his chin. Someone stepped on his knife hand. He groaned.

The first ruffian squatted beside him. "You mother was a slut like all Rokan women!"

That was what they called Lucinda in the street that night. The voice - he knew this man. One of Lucinda's murderers. Corgren tried to snap an insult, but it escaped his lips as senseless garble.

"You'll pay with all your winnings and triple from the next one, Rokan. Tell us where the money is!"

Corgren stirred. His eyes blinked. No. He had to fight them. Do something to the rats! Spots floated in his vision, his limbs failed to respond to the urgency.

A shout of words - in a foreign tongue - shattered the silence over the river.

His attackers groaned, then screamed. "It burns! Help!" They tore at their clothes.

Corgren blinked. There were no flames.

All the attackers leaped the rails. They floundered in the water and screamed louder. Someone else moved, cutting ropes between the boats. Paugren! At last! His brother tossed a lantern onto the other deck. He slashed them free of their mooring and poled them away from the bank, so they caught the current. The other boat drifted in growing flames, the thug's screams lost in the rising roar.

Corgren attempted standing but slipped to the deck.

Paugren's face hovered over him. "We're safe. Let me look at you." A lamp gleamed nearby them.

Corgren winced at the brightness and squeezed his eyes shut.

"Those are bad cuts. Did you hit your head?"

He shivered but nodded.

Paugren drew the blanket over Corgren. "Just rest. I'll steer us down-river."

Chapter 4

Afterward, Corgren wanted for coherence as darkness or light clouded his vision each time he opened his eyes. Sometimes Paugren's face, brow furrowed below his shock of dark hair, hovered over his waking confusion. Once he only recognized his brother from their familial hooked nose.

Twice, he heard conversation outside the boat cabin, but only once he understood a few words.

Paugren's voice hissed, "He'll come around, I tell you. He'll take the marks."

"He'd better after all I've done. He'll recover now. You should have called for me sooner." Boots clapped on the deck as the other left while he spoke.

Corgren's consciousness slipped away. He grimaced. That voice sounded familiar. Whose was it? He relaxed, his breathing shallow. It was, it was -.

He fell into tattered dreams of knives and cloaked figures. People laughed in a street. Lucinda screamed. Her faced danced to stillness, pale in shadow. So beautiful, her oval face with high cheeks, soft skin and -. Her supple lips didn't spread into her sunny smile. Her eyes, dark and lively, remained closed.

Lucinda? Lucinda!

Blood splashed her face. Her eyes snapped open. Her face contorted with the terror of death.

Corgren sat up, gasping. Sweat covered his torso and he threw off his blanket. He rubbed his hand over his shaved pate. It was sweaty and there was stubble grown out. He winced at a painful knot on his scalp. "Paugren." His voiced croaked with thirst. He swung his feet off the bunk. "Paugren."

Bare feet slapped on the deck and Paugren burst through the cabin door. "Hey, you're awake."

"Water." He stood weak knees. "What happened?"

Paugren steadied him. "The thieves in the night. You hit your head." Paugren guided him

to a chair and set a cup of water on the table for him.

"Yes." His head wobbled and he shot his brother a smile. "We sent them on their way."

"Barely." Paugren's grin spread weakly.

"How long have I been down?"

"You've been in and out for a week. Been talking nonsense - and about her too - but you took a good turn yesterday."

"Where are we?" It was dusk outside but was it night or dawn? "What's the time?" Corgren drank the entire cup and poured more.

"It's near dawn. We're tied up well below Astor."

He frowned. "So far? Why not at the wharf?"

His brother started work on a meal. "With you hurt, I just kept us moving. I didn't want to lay-up at the wharf in case there might be trouble from that crowd."

Corgren nodded. "Yes, they said their leader was looking to take a cut from ring-fighters."

"Is that so?" Paugren paused over the porridge. "I wondered what they were after other than the money."

Corgren clenched his fists and relaxed them. "We'll have to be more careful - or pay their tax." He reached for bowls and spoons from his chair.

"We'll make plenty anyway. I've even delivered that last shipment so we're doing very well now." Paugren paused at his stirring and patted Corgren's shoulder. "We'll be fine."

Corgren blinked and scowled. The edge of Paugren's dragon tattoo peaked from under his sleeve. He furrowed his brow. That voice. It had been the stranger that made the offer to him. There was more going on here than Paugren let on. He narrowed his eyes at his brother's back when Paugren turned back to the griddle. He cleared his throat. "Still, how long can our luck last. These Hartians always want money - at the wharves and now from winnings."

Paugren spooned out their breakfast. "That's not just us, they have fees for all shipping."

"But there's more to it than that." He blew on his porridge and his stomach rumbled. "They won't let us prosper long. How long can I remain lucky in the ring?" He was weak as a newborn now.

"You'll be fine in a week or so." Paugren tasted his food, winced and cooled his burned tongue with a quick gulp of water.

Corgren shook his head and sat back in his chair. "If I keep winning, they'll just demand I fight two, then three, then more. I'll need more than skill."

"That won't happen. I won't set us up against such odds." Paugren grinned and looked Corgren in the eyes. "But were you thinking of something?"

Corgren lifted his chin. "Where'd you get those tattoos."

Paugren shifted his gaze to his bowl and tried the porridge again with greater care. "Somewhere upriver. Went drinking to setup a fight."

Corgren tested his porridge and found it cooler. He ate his fill and pushed the empty bowl away as he sat back. "Those men that night on our boat, they jumped overboard like they were burning. Someone shouted strange words. Was that you?"

His brother shrugged. "Yeah, I suppose I shouted to get them off you."

"It was a foreign language, and they went for the river fast, like something burned them."

"I didn't hear anything like that. You hit your head." Paugren patted his head. "You were confused is all."

"Yeah, I suppose. But who else did I hear on the boat once when I woke?"

Paugren's eyes narrowed, and he cocked his head. "Likely when I delivered those furs."

"He was talking about me, not a shipment."

"There was no one else aboard."

"There was, who was it? You knew him."

Paugren rose. "Look, I'll get the boat moving. You clear the table and rest today."

Corgren clenched his fists and resisted pulling a knife. He couldn't - wouldn't - threaten his brother. "There was. I've talked to him before, after my last fight."

Paugren paused in the doorway. "I don't know what you're talking about. Now let me get us going so we can arrange at least a shipment while you're recovering."

Corgren relaxed in his bunk for a while after Paugren castoff from the riverbank and they drifted on the current. Thunder rolled across the river by mid-morning and Paugren returned for his rain slicker.

"Paugren, thanks for everything you've done." Corgren leaned on one elbow. He wanted his brother to know they weren't enemies. They were all the two of them had.

His brother answered Corgren's words with a short nod.

"I'll put coffee on."

Paugren nodded again and stepped toward the door. He sighed in the doorway and turned his head. "He can help us in ways we never imagined."

Corgren sat on the side of the bunk. "How? What does he want?"

"That's for him to tell."

"Is he Hartian?"

"No. But he wants to help us - help southern Rok where Hart is concerned."

Corgren rubbed the stubble on his head, avoiding the tender knot. "Who is he? Is it that old dragon cult?"

Paugren touched his right forearm. "His identity is for him to reveal. What he's up to is his own business. But he wants us to work with him."

"He wants our service? Wouldn't that be as bad as serving Hartians?

Paugren turned further, his eyes wide. "He's very powerful. Our service is small compared to what he can do."

He crossed his arms. "And what happened the night we were attacked? Was that from him?"

"He taught me that, the words of power."

"Spells, you mean?"

Paugren nodded. "You have a decision to make, brother. One that affects both of us - and, maybe, Rok." His brother left him with those words and tended the boat.

Rain soon pattered on the deck. Corgren heated coffee and left it warm for his brother. If only he knew what to do. Paugren was more impetuous than he was. That stranger had given Paugren that spell. He'd also done something to heal Corgren's injuries - he was certain of that. What that man wanted and what he could do concerned Corgren though.

Chapter 5

Within the week, he sparred with Paugren using wooden sticks. His weakness haunted him worse than dreams of Lucinda and he took many a bruise from the work. But over several weeks, he regained his fighting form and soon bested his brother with his usual ease. By that time, they had traveled up-river with a small sail and poles and landed at Astor with a shipment of wool from Harport on the coast. Corgren paid the dock fee while Paugren left to arrange a bout in the ring.

Paugren soon returned with a broad grin. He waved the agreement at his brother when he stepped off the gangplank. "It's the best pay yet!"

"How much?" Corgren crossed his arms. Their best had been ten thousand Hartian credits, mostly in paper notes and those had been hard to trade for coin. He doubted his brother's claim.

Paugren leaned close. "Twenty-five." His triumphant grin broadened more.

"What? Who?" He snatched the agreement away. It must be someone good - very good - for that amount.

"Mad Morcus!" Paugren looked around but there was no one close.

Corgren suppressed a groan. He wasn't ready. He swallowed. "An equal my first time back?" Equal? Mad Morcus might be better. He swallowed the sudden lump in his throat.

Paugren slapped him on the shoulder. "You'll be fine. Besides, it was the only one they offered."

Corgren paced away. There was nothing for it. They'd lose money - and standing - if he backed out. "When?"

"Tomorrow night."

"Then I better sharpen my knife."

Paugren shuffled his feet and cleared his throat. "There's one more thing. That 'ring-master' has men in town. They'll try to force us to pay their fees."

Corgren narrowed his eyes. "We'll see about that. Let's make sure the boat is ready just in

case."

They spend the rest of the afternoon planning their escape the following night. But Corgren suppressed his doubts. If only he could win. He knew Mad Morcus by reputation though. It was rumored the man was faster than thought and fought in a crazed style.

After a restless night, Corgren rose early and began his fight-day activities, though he mainly rested. Once evening arrived, he and Paugren walked to the old warehouse which housed the fighting ring. He stripped to the waist and checked his knife.

Paugren massaged Corgren's shoulders. "Remember, he may be quick and unorthodox in his style, but he's got tells. Watch for them." Paugren finished the massage and patted his bare shoulders. "Good fighting, brother." They grasped hands and Paugren departed for the stands.

Corgren stood alone for a few moments, thankful that they kept opponents apart, so the fight stayed in the ring for the paying patrons. His stomach flopped. It wasn't unusual that he experienced nerves. But this was different. He now faced his injury as well as an equal fighter.

"You shouldn't fight tonight, really, never like this."

Corgren jumped and whirled. The old man in the hat stood by the door. "How'd you get in here?" He squinted. He never heard the door at all.

The old man spread his arm, hands up. "I came in with you."

He touched his knife. "You weren't with me."

"Easy, I mean no harm. Just giving free warning. With your head you shouldn't fight. And, no matter what, don't say yes to the other one."

"Who are you? How do you know so much?" He stepped around the table in the room.

The old man never moved. "In some countries I'm called Eloch."

Corgren laughed. "If you're that old wife's-tale of a god then I'm King of Hart." There hadn't been a king in Hart for centuries.

Eloch, or whoever he was, smiled but said nothing.

The crowd-noise rose beyond the ring-door. Corgren turned and put his hand on the door. "Even if I believed, I must fight or face near ruin." He turned back to an empty room. He laughed but his stomach flopped. Must be his nerves. Really. But he'd never seen visions of people before a fight. He held out his hands. They were steady.

He sighed and turned to the door against which washed the muffled chatter of the crowd. He opened it and stepped onto the sawdust. An excited chatter rose with a few cheers or shouts of acknowledgment.

Corgren took a deep breath and the familiar scent of pine sap from the sawdust chased

the flutters from his stomach. He turned to the stands beyond the rough, wooden walls where torch and pipe smoke mingled in a haze. Men laid their bets, others pointed at him, their eyes often unfocused from hard drinking.

Paugren stood near Corgren's door, grinning his excitement. He promised he'd remain sober in case they needed a quick escape.

Behind Paugren loomed another person; the man who offered him power for his service. The stranger's lower face showed beneath his hood. He watched for Corgren's decision. The question hung between them. Corgren swung his arms to keep loose. Best let that offer lie rather than distract him.

Cheers rose from the crowd. Corgren's opponent had entered. Paugren gaped and shifted his eyes between him and the man on the other side of the ring. Corgren faced his opponent, froze and gaped as well.

It couldn't be! But it was. One of Lucinda's killers! If his stomach were a kettle, it would have boiled. His eyes narrowed. Mad Morcus was Murderer Morcus. He was certain of the fact. The faces of those rats were etched in Corgren's memory. They had laughed as they rode away from Lucinda's blood-drenched body while he had held her.

Someone spoke, and Corgren returned to the moment. His chest heaved to the point that he groaned with each breath. He gritted his teeth as the announcer shouted their names to the gathered throng.

The bell thundered in Corgren's ears. He rushed straight for Mad Morcus and slashed at his throat. For a moment, the murderer's narrow face hesitated before he twisted away.

Morcus countered with slash and a whirling punch.

The knife drew but a thin scratch, yet the punch landed squarely in Corgren's kidney. His direct attack almost cost him, but he scrambled away as Morcus re-gathered his wits from Corgren's sudden attack.

Morcus rushed him and Corgren surged back, unwilling to defend. They twisted and avoided each other's blades and then grabbed wrists as they grappled.

He stared into Morcus's eyes. His hatred burned as he forced the murderer back.

But Mad Morcus pulled Corgren's knife past him and released his hold. The murderer slammed his fist into his head. Morcus wheeled away from Corgren's weak counter-cut.

Corgren fell back, dazed. He blinked. Morcus knew of his injury. His hatred faded to uncertainty as spots flooded his vision.

Mad Morcus feinted, testing Corgren. He shuffled his feet too slowly and his opponent

dove past his defense.

He backpedaled as Morcus pressed his advance, slashing at Corgren's arms as he came. The blade bit his forearm. He tried to side-step, but Morcus lowered his shoulder and bore him into the wall. His head slammed the wood.

His ears rang and he fell, pulling Morcus atop him. Somehow, Corgren gripped Morcus's knife wrist. His hands shook, holding the blade from his chest.

Morcus slapped his head once, twice, thrice.

Corgren had been so foolhardy, fighting on his emotion, forgetting his tactics. His eyes rolled. The crowd shouted but he heard nothing of their noise.

Morcus put his weight into his attack. Corgren's arms quivered. The knife descended slowly for his heart. He rolled his head and gritted his teeth. He blinked sawdust from his eyes and spots still swam there.

Paugren leaned over the wall, his eyes wide.

Morcus's knife sank lower.

Behind his brother, the stranger motioned with his hands, a questioning gesture.

The point hovered over his chest.

Corgren had but one choice. He nodded, staring at the stranger who motioned again. His vision cleared and sound returned. He pushed against Morcus, forcing the away blade by a slim increment.

Morcus re-doubled his effort, ignoring everything else, certain of victory.

Swiftly, Corgren worked his feet between them and thrust at Morcus with his feet. The murderer flipped away and slammed into the wall.

The crowd screamed as Corgren scrambled to his feet ahead of Morcus. They met again as before, now covered in sawdust. He grabbed Morcus's knife wrist. Morcus snatched at Corgren who twisted his arm away from the murderer's grasp.

Surprise registered on Mad Morcus's face. Corgren's knife slammed into the murderer's neck below the ear.

Blood spurted as Corgren yanked and cut an artery. Morcus stumbled back and Corgren released his grip. Lucinda's murderer tumbled on his back and flopped like a fish in a net, dropping his knife.

Before the other man even stopped twitching, Corgren snatched up his knife and held it over his head with his own. The crowd roared. He spotted other faces in the crowd, faces red or jaws clenched. Time to leave.

He backed toward his door with a glance to cheering Paugren who slipped away from the ring-wall. The stranger in the cloak no longer stood behind his brother. No matter, he'd gotten his victory. The stranger knew where to find him.

Corgren feigned his exultation in the crowd's adulation. He waved once and slipped through the door. He shoved the knives inside his belt and retrieved his shirt and a dark cloak Paugren had left for him. Without pausing to wash, Corgren sauntered out of the building and into the night. Paugren better move quickly - but not so fast that he aroused suspicion. There was enough of that. And those other men were certain to be Morcus's friends, maybe even some of them were Lucinda's other Hartian murderers.

In the street, Corgren slipped into the opening of a dark alley. People exited the warehouse. Some staggered and shouted their pleasure or dismay at the outcome. Others milled by the door. They were casual, but several of them didn't fool Corgren; they were waiting for him.

A shadow shifted in the alley. Corgren whirled and pulled a knife, holding it out of any light. A pale hand motioned for quiet and then beckoned him further into the alley's darkness. The stranger wanted a meeting now? Most of the lingering men at the door wandered along the street but a few remained. Corgren followed his benefactor deeper into the alley but held his knife ready.

The cloaked figure stopped at the end. "You've agreed to serve."

Corgren shifted peered along the alley. "Yes, but we need to be quick here. Paugren's coming with the purse and those thugs are waiting." No doubt there were plenty more men waiting in hiding.

"Paugren is well. You need to take my marks now." The stranger flipped his cloak aside.

"There's no time for tattoos." Voices echoed along the street beyond the alley.

"There's time and it's now. Roll up your sleeves."

Corgren hesitated. This man was powerful to heal him so easily - that was clear. But many men threatened. "What's your name?"

"Put the knife away and show your arms. We must seal the agreement." The stranger's eyes glowed beneath the hood and his voice deepened. "Now! Will you renege on this and your other debts to me?"

Corgren shoved the knife into his belt and rolled up his sleeves. He extended his hands, palms up. But his eyes strayed along the alley. Pain seared his arms, and he whipped his head back.

"Listen now to my instruction, always listen. First, be still for this ritual." The stranger's voice rumbled like thunder. His fingers clawed the skin on Corgren's arms. The wounds glowed as the fingers wiggled.

He clenched his fists and strained against the pain.

"Concerning spells, write them if you wish but know the proper tones or suffer the consequences." Twin dragon's heads appeared on his arms, glowing and bloody. "Blood is the price of my powers. It's why your brother put you in so many fights of late." Now shoulders and forelegs glowed in the alley. "Learn these words now." The fingers writhed and the stranger snapped foreign words.

Corgren repeated what he heard, but he knew nothing of their meaning. Through the last of the searing pain, the dragon's tails grew in his flesh, lashing for a moment across his skin and then stilling. He finished the words.

"There goes the brother!" Voices shouted in the street beyond the alley. Boots slapped upon street stones.

The stranger pulled a curved dagger, its pommel worked into the shape of a snarling wolf's head. "To you I give a new knife. It sears the soul for the blood you must pay."

He took the dagger.

"Corgren!" Paugren stumbled into the alley and fell.

"Here we have him! Pay your fees, Rokan dog!" The sounds of a beating began behind Corgren.

"You owe me more than service now, Corgren. Twice I've saved you and now again. Each is a blood payment. How will you pay? Your brother who risked you for blood or those you hate?" A long-nailed finger covered in scales pointed behind him. "I am Magdronu, the Terrible and Glorious, who will ascend to the heavens! Say my name and choose the blood!"

Corgren stepped toward his brother and the ruffians. The knife flashed in the darkness.

One man looked toward Corgren. "And here's the brother!" Eight men dropped Paugren and faced him.

Corgren raised the dagger and pointed it toward the Hartian thugs. "Magdronu, the Terrible and Glorious, who will ascend to the heavens!"

The Hartians gasped. "I can't move!" They struggled but failed to lift even a finger.

With the dagger raised, Corgren advanced on the attackers. "Hartian dogs, now you pay for all you've done!" He slit the first man's throat and the others begged. He ignored them and killed in the name of his new master. Blood spattered the walls, ran along the alley and

festooned Corgren's clothes.

Paugren lay at Corgren's feet and groaned. "Brother, so good of you to join me."

"It is complete." Corgren found Magdronu at his side, a hand, now human-looking, laid on his arm. "You shall have all you need to rid Rok of Hartian rule. Only follow my commands."

Corgren helped Paugren to his feet. He turned back to his new master and found him gone. But at the far end of the alley, the shadow of the old man in the hat stood back-lit against dim lamp-light. That crazy geezer. He dismissed "Eloch" with a wave of his hand. When he looked again, that man was gone too.

"C'mon, let's get to the boat and cast off." Paugren snatched Corgren's sleeves over his forearms and the exited the alley.

As they turned into the street, Corgren paused a moment and surveyed the lifeless shadows in the alley. "Everything I've done is for you, Lucinda." He followed Paugren to the dock and their boat.

This is the end of Trading Knives.

Looking for the next book in the series?

Find What Is Needed, Prequel #2 of The Bow of Hart Saga here.

Reader Guide: Excerpt from What Is Needed, Prequel 2 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Prophecy is a knife in the dark, betrayal is the deepest of wounds.

Visions of destruction flock to Hastra. The mystic order of Withlings stands threatened with dark deeds. Betrayal festers within the order. Without any guidance, Hastra investigates who the source of the danger may be. But how much time does she have and who should she trust with her visions? Will saving the order cost Hastra more than she can pay?

If you like fantasy with an edge, read What Is Need where the betrayal is as deep as stab wound.

Grab a piece of destiny mingled with blood in this second prequel of The Bow of Hart Saga.

Books most like: The Sword of Shannara, Lord of the Rings and other classic, epic fantasy.

Excerpt

Along the winding approach to Withling's Watch, a lone figure rode a plodding horse, bowed against the buffeting wind. Youthful hands battled the fingers of cold that snatched at cloak and hood. Strands of brown hair fluttered out of the hood as the woman who owned them huffed clouds of breath out her nose. Her receding chin held firm with clenched teeth against the encroaching chill. Her dark, brown eyes squinted into the wind and watered.

Withling's Watch squatted ahead now in deeper shadow as the dregs of sunlight dwindled behind the Gray Spires. Hastra's head bobbed with the motion of her mare's hoof-dragging gait. It was good to come home. She yawned and shivered. But the occasion of the first winter

snow left her wishing for a warm fire and dinner at the village inn bypassed hours earlier. Zelma and friends waited with welcome. Hastra's stomach rumbled. But first, some food.

The expansive stone building loomed out of the dusk as the horse climbed the cobble-stoned incline to the walled keep. Smoke puffed from chimneys. She kicked her weary horse for a faster pace but the animal whickered and ignored her urging.

The gusts from the eastern flanks of the Gray Spires flung Hastra's fur-lined cloak in wild contortions. She tugged the garment under control, held it one-handed against another blast, and gripped the reins in her other hand. She chuckled between her chattering teeth. That woke her. They may be a house of mystics and miracles but even they suffered from cold and hunger. Her stomach growled again.

Horseshoes rang on the road as she approached the gates. Lamps in the gatehouse cast a pool of light in the gloom. Hastra pulled her cloak tighter and lifted her head. Snow threatened all day and night arrived fast below those peaks. Her gaze followed stray snowflakes onto her horse's head.

She blinked into gathering gloom. Hastra gasped. The gatehouse lights were out and the keep stood dark. Her eyes narrowed. The wrought-iron gates stood ajar and listed like a ship in a gale. She pulled the reins and the mare halted with a snort.

The wind howled and exploded past the squealing gateway. Shadow slammed into Hastra and she tumbled off the mare. Screams of terror and snarls of violence echoed from the courtyard. Fire belched from the darkness and roared past her. The mingled voices fell silent while gusts moaned like ghosts around the desolate square.

Boots clattered on the stone pavement.

Looking for this next book in the series?

Find What Is Needed, Prequel #2 of The Bow of Hart Saga here.

Reader Guide: A Letter to You

Dear Reader,

I hope you enjoyed this opening book of The Bow of Hart Saga as much as I enjoyed writing it. Trading Knives is only the beginning as a prequel story. There are other books including the three main novels, two of which won awards when they were published.

This reader guide is intended to provide you with more information about the series including the world in which it is set, Denaria. I hope this prequel and guide help you along this reading journey as there is so much to the story including meeting some intriguing characters. Corgren and his brother are just two and this story reveals their beginning as villains. There's so much for you to discover in the following books, so excerpts are included as well as other information to keep you oriented in the world of Denaria.

Thank you so much for reading the book and for spending time with me. Enjoy the series and share it with your reading friends.

In gratitude,

P. H. Solomon

P. S. As a bonus, click this link to request an Authorgraph autograph from me and I'll respond with one you can insert into your e-reader.

P. P. S. If you've enjoyed reading this book in The Bow of Hart Saga, you can subscribe to my newsletter for more information about my projects in-flight, fun updates about each series

and news about upcoming releases. Click here to subscribe and receive another free book, sample content and coupons for merchandise (Oops, I think I gave away the surprise!).

Reader Guide: Cast of Characters & Place Names

Cast of Characters:
Trading Knives

Corgren: a human male from Rok who owns a small freight boat with his brother Paugren. Together, the haul freight along the Hart River. Corgren also makes money knife-fighting in small arenas in the river towns they frequent.

Paugren: Corgren's brother and co-owner of their freight boat. He is both Corgren's trainer and manager for the lethal knife-fighting rings where they compete for extra money.

Hacker: a fighter from Hart who participates in the local knife-fighting rings in the river towns along the Hart River.

Magdronu: an ancient dragon demi-god said to have long been dead, imprisoned, or cursed by the god Eloch. Magdronu cults are rumored to operate in secret until the dragon arises to power.

Lucinda: a woman of Rok once betrothed to Corgren who has died.

Mad Morcus: a knife-fighter in the river-town rings, considered to be the most dangerous man to face in the arena.

Places:

Denaria: the name of all the lands in which the story is set.

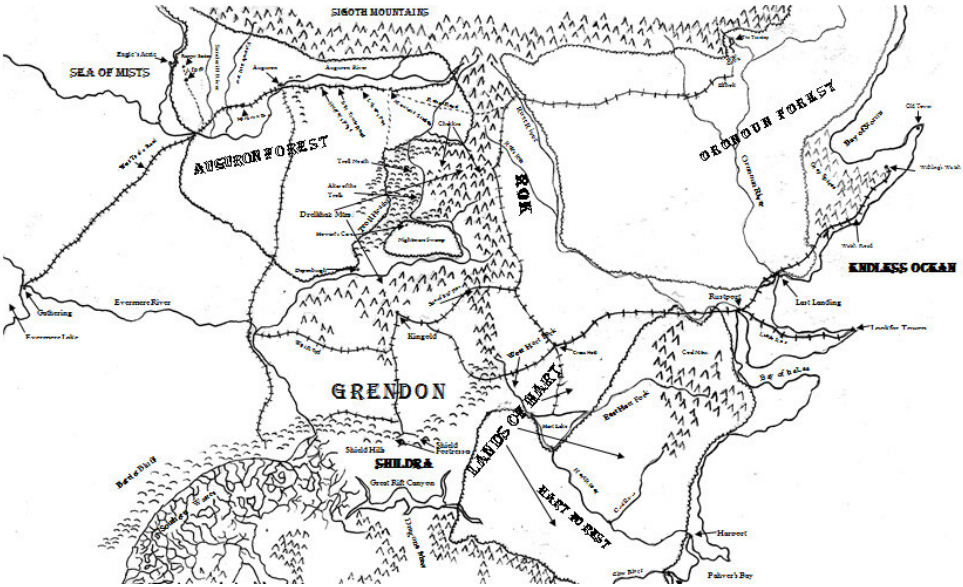
Hart: a land of forests and rivers ruled loosely by dozens of local nobles formed into a confederation. It's main sources of income are lumber and trade along it's main waterway, the Hart River which flows from Hart Lake to the Endless Sea at Harport. Hart exerts control over southern lands of neighboring Rok past the northern shore of Hart Lake.

Rok: a land ruled by a king of warlike disposition, but few means to support its aspirations lacking the development to mine or trade. Rokans are superstitious and willing to follow local religious leaders in order to attempt to take what they want, yet lack the strength to rally into a cohesive kingdom, warring among themselves as much as raiding neighboring kingdoms.

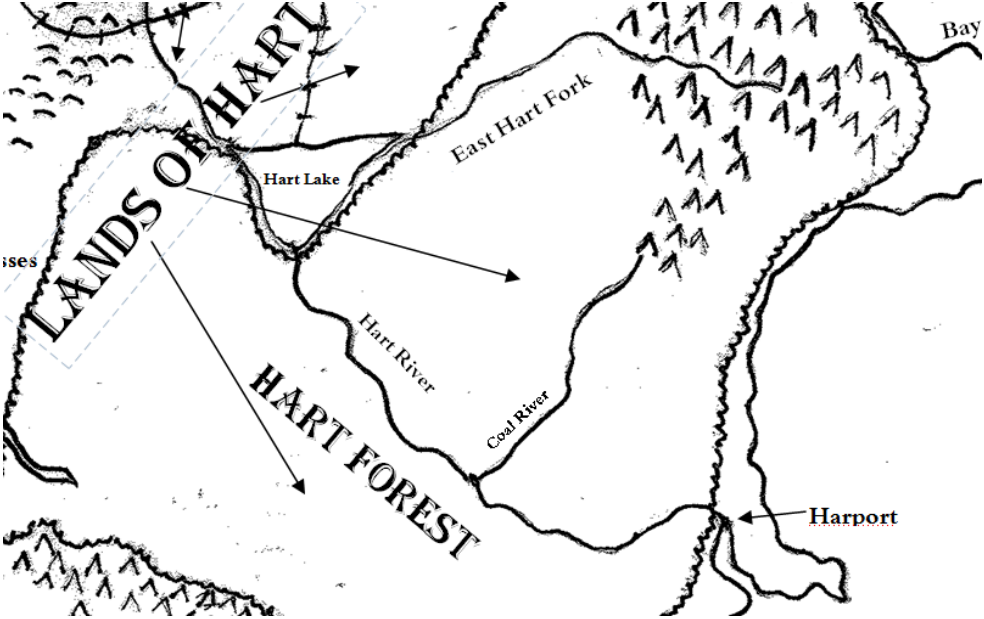
Hart River: the main waterway of Hart which runs from the southern tip of Hart Lake southeast into the Endless Sea at Hartport. The river is a busy trading thoroughfare for freight brought from far southern shores into the central regions of Denaria.

Harport: the port city of Hart which functions under the control of a confederation of nobles who control sections of the Hart River. The port operates as a city-state with little control beyond its limits and enforcing taxes on trade for the confederation of nobles.

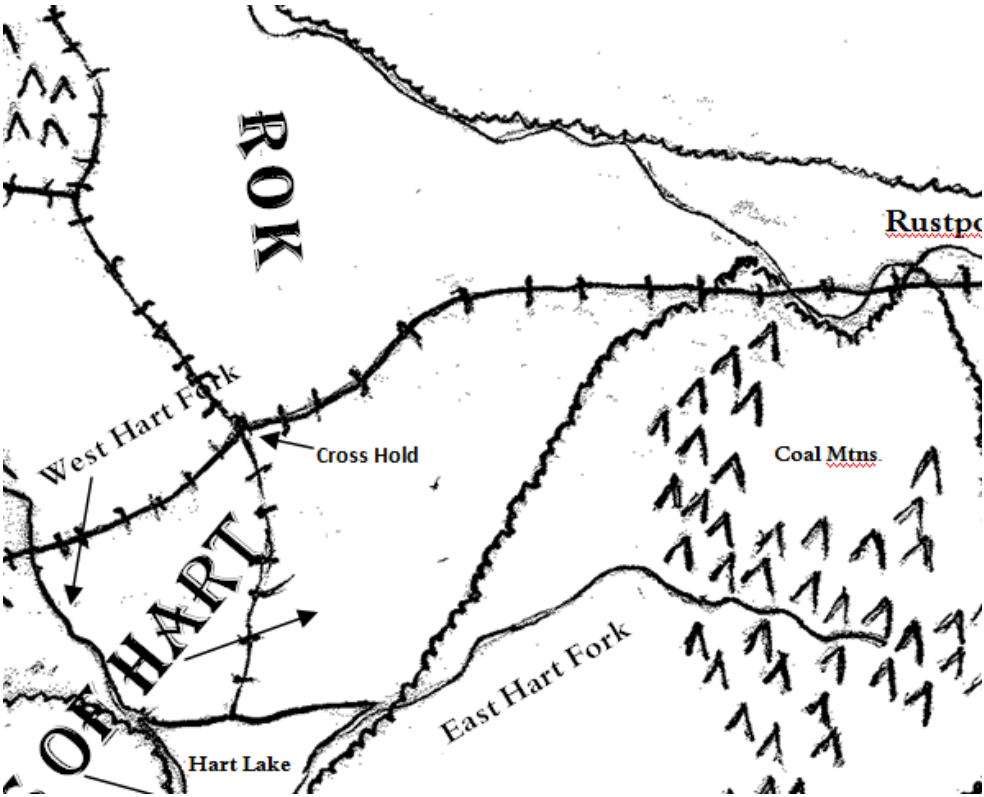
Reader Guide: Maps



Northeastern Denaria



Hart, Rok, and Surrounding Lands



Reader Guide: Series Order

Trading Knives, Prequel 0.1 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Trading a knife costs a life. The offer of help may cost more.

Corgren more than holds his own in the prize fighting rings where skill with a knife is the only mercy he'll find. While an old enemy haunts his memory, new ones gather with each victory gained. Corgren's choices narrow. A stranger offers Corgren power for his service, tempting him with revenge for past wrongs. He considers the offer with doubt. Demands for a cut of his winnings squeezes his independence until a foe possibly more skilled and cunning than him enters the ring. Will he accept the offer at the cost of himself? **If you like fantasy with an edge, read Trading Knives where the action is as sharp as a knife.**

What Is Needed, Prequel 0.2 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Prophecy is a knife in the dark, betrayal is the deepest of wounds.

Visions of destruction flock to Hastra. The mystic order of Withlings stands threatened with dark deeds. Betrayal festers within the order. Without any guidance, Hastra investigates who the source of the danger may be. But how much time does she have and who should she trust with her visions? Will saving the order cost Hastra more than she can pay?

If you like fantasy with an edge, read What Is Need where the betrayal is as deep as stab wound.

Grab a piece of destiny mingled with blood in this second prequel of The Bow of Hart Saga.

The Bow of Destiny, Book 1 of The Bow of Hart Saga, 2016 Book of the Year as named by Fantasia Reviews.

Haunted by his past. Hunted in the present. Uncertain what is real. Destiny might kill Athson before he finds the bow.

Athson suffered hallucinations ever since he was orphaned, including a dog no one else sees. The will in his possession, bestowed in a dream, can't be real. But the trolls now hunting him are. A destiny, both inconvenient and unavoidable, drags Athson into an unwanted quest that challenges all his assumptions.

Can he trust anyone?

Sworn to secrecy by his dead father about the bow, Athson wants nothing to do with it. A dragon and a wizard want the bow - and Athson dead. Running from the quest and his destiny are tempting options.

Then he finds something unexpected. Will his discovery destroy him before he recovers the bow?

"The characters climb off the pages" of this award-winning epic fantasy with a fresh approach pitting a shapeshifting dragon against a hero haunted by prophesy and death. A quest for the fabled Bow of Hart drags Athson into danger between a dragon and a deadly wizard.

If you love classic fantasy with new ideas, read The Bow of Destiny because it's quietly addictive. Get it now.

An Arrow Against the Wind, Book 2 of The Bow of Hart Saga, 2017 Book of the Year as named by Fantasia Reviews.

Haunted by his past. Hunted in the present. Tossed like an arrow in the wind.

Athson discovered the unexpected during the search for The Bow of Hart. Yet the prophesied weapon remains hidden.

Mysteries discovered during the quest draw him deeper into the peril. The flames of vengeance surge in his thoughts with new revelations.

Can he escape the traps of his enemies?

The dragon's reach endangers even Athson's companions in unexpected ways. His enemy wants the bow but his mentor claims it must be used according to prophesy. With each turn of the search for the bow, long-hidden secrets surface and Athson must find the bow or risk losing those dear to him.

When the dragon gains leverage over him, Athson is torn between destiny and desire.

But Athson seeks his own path.

Will he falter like an arrow against the wind?

The hero of this award-winning edition of "an entertaining fantasy series in the classic quest adventure mold" defies a merciless wizard and a sly dragon. But Athson's on the hunt for more than destiny. His aim is tested between doom and vengeance.

Grab a piece of destiny now.

If you like epic fantasy, then you'll love An Arrow Against the Wind because the adventure spins like an arrow in flight.

The White Arrow, Book 3 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Bound to prophecy, his destiny balanced on an arrow's tip.

With the Bow of Hart in hand, Athson is hunted by his enemies. His mistakes haunt him as much as his past.

Magdronu plots to thwart the prophecy as his trolls attack Auguron City.

Hastra the Withling reveals Eloch will send an arrow for the bow. But when the arrow arrives, it is from an unexpected source and lands in unforeseen hands. Events twist like an arrow in flight…

Can Athson overcome his past and use the Bow of Hart as intended?

The archer and the bow await the coming arrow…

If you like epic fantasy read The White Arrow because it's a "fabulous conclusion…"

The climactic ending of this award-winning epic fantasy saga "twists and turns with stop in your tracks kind of moments." A dragon threatens Athson with an army of trolls. The mystic arrow for the Bow of Hart is endangered. Athson's destiny spins on the arrow's point.

Grab a piece of destiny now…

Reader Guide: Excerpt from The Bow of Destiny, Book 1 of The Bow of Hart Saga

THE BOW OF DESTINY

Book 1 of The Bow of Hart Saga

"Solomon has his own signature touch..., original and unique" - ★★★★★ Fantasia Reviews 2016 Book of the Year

"...one can almost see the trail, and fear the trolls" - ★★★★★ Reader Review

"the characters are still dancing around in my head, the sign of a fantastic journey" - ★★★★★ Reader Review

Haunted by his past. Hunted in the present. Uncertain what is real.

Athson suffered hallucinations ever since he was orphaned, including a dog no one else sees. The will in his possession, bestowed in a dream, can't be real. But the trolls now hunting him are. A destiny, both inconvenient and unavoidable, drags Athson into an unwanted quest that challenges all his assumptions.

Can he trust anyone?

Sworn to secrecy by his dead father about the bow, Athson wants nothing to do with it. A dragon and a wizard want the bow - and Athson dead. Running from the quest and his destiny are tempting options.

Then he finds something unexpected. Will his discovery destroy him before he recovers the bow?

Excerpt

When his dead father touched his hand, Athson almost dropped the arrow. He squeezed his

eyes shut. Ignore him. Focus. He took a slow, deep breath. Not this, not now.

"That's it, slow breaths, steady your hands." His father helped him nock the arrow.

"You're not here. You're dead." Athson whispered lest he startle his prey. He didn't need help with the arrow.

"And Athson, make sure you keep that secret I trusted with you." Ath's hand dropped away.

"I've held my tongue." Athson's lip quivered, and he forced his hands steady. A memory and nothing more. That's what he got for forgetting his medicine. But he had kept the secret over the years since his father taught him the bow that day.

Athson knelt on one knee with an arrow nocked and gauged each target. Wind gusted and flattened grass in its weaving dance. Waves boomed against the Sea of Mist's rocky shore beneath the cliff's edge two hundred strides distant. The pheasant was trickier, he decided. The rabbit would do. His gaze shifted between the two animals. No shakes, no more old memories while cleaning the kill. He brushed the vane feather with his thumb. But the memory didn't bode well.

Athson eased into his stance at the shaded edge of forest, waiting unseen by his prey. The wind fell still. He drew the arrow to his cheek, aimed, and exhaled. A litter of kits hopped near his intended meal. He blinked. No killing a mother. He shifted targets and released.

The arrow sprang away in silence and pierced the green-feathered head.

Athson strode from hiding, high grass tangling at his shins. The rabbit and her litter scrambled into their hole. "You're safe this time."

He squatted by the pheasant and plucked out chestnut tail feathers. When he cut the striped neck, Athson shut his eyes. The less blood seen, the better, to avoid the memories. Athson yanked his arrow loose with a grunt. "Sarneth sends me to the middle of nowhere, so I waste time hunting." Father plucked the arrows with more care. Maybe his father should have used other things with the same care.

He thrust with his belt-knife and gutted the bird. Torn innards stank. Images flashed behind his eyes of bodies writhing as weapons were yanked free. He swallowed. Why this, why now? He sat on his heels and counted the months since his last fit. Over a year, and his elvish tincture of Soul's-ease lay forgotten at the ranger station. Not good. He needed that medicine. He rubbed his temples. Fits were hard, but seeing things later confused him. He sighed. Days of parsing reality lay ahead. Gweld, his elven friend and fellow ranger, would be disappointed at his laxness with the medicine.

He buried the bird's offal well away from his camp. Athson brushed a hand over his eyes

with a sigh. No shakes, no memories. He took a deep breath and marched away, teeth grinding. He needed to seek peace and not anger. The wind picked at foliage and birds called in the forest. But tension clung to his shoulders.

At his campsite Athson hung his kill over his fire from a makeshift spit. Early chill sent him gathering more firewood, a worthless duty at an empty border. He eyed the stand of fir trees, doing anything but thinking. They were a good windbreak but wouldn't guard against that night's nip. Building a canopy of fir limbs near the fire at the opening would warm his cold feet.

The breeze rose stiff with the promise of a frigid bite later as Athson gathered armloads of deadwood. "I'll need that canopy." The gust blew stiffer.

Athson frowned at the smoke marking his position for miles when he approached his camp and muttered in dissatisfaction. Rocky ground and no smokeless pit-fire. He shrugged off the irritation. "There're no trolls this far west in the Auguron Forest."

Racing the dusk while gathering firewood was all the excitement Athson encountered. He snagged another fallen limb, hurrying more now to check his roasting pheasant than to beat nightfall.

The wind shifted and carried the hint of smoke from his campfire. Sudden nausea left him unsteady. Memory of other fire on a different night quickened his heart. Athson snagged the last of the wood for his final armload.

"You take this bag and hide."

"Leave me alone mother, you're long gone." Athson coughed and stumbled over roots.

Smoke curls through the thatch over the rafters. His mother shoves food and a coat into the bag.

That wasn't now, that was ten years past. He groaned and blinked a tear away.

Athson sank to his knees and coughed against choking smoke. *His mother acts calm but he sees fear in her wide, hazel eyes and her rigid movements. Smoke thickens and flames roar beyond the door. The warning horn blows. Screams erupt outside and mingle with joyous snarls of attacking trolls.*

Athson's mother heaves him out the window. "Hide as best you can."

They both cough. Athson nods and opens his mouth.

The door slams open. His mother snatches an iron skillet and cracks a hobgoblin in the face. The attacker collapses but others leap through the door. His mother yells and flails with the skillet.

Athson ducks away and runs into the night amid the dancing light of burning Depenburgh.

He coughed and shook his head and found himself on trembling hands and knees. The

armload of wood lay scattered where he had fallen. He swore and ground his teeth. “Get up and see to the bird.”

Athson lunged from the ground, forgetting his wood, and wrenched his gaze away from the mound of the pheasant’s buried offal. Dinner needed attention. Athson’s dragging boots as he stumbled along sounded like shovels biting the dirt.

“This is taking too long.” Athson’s father stands massaging his back, his haggard face smudged with soil. The other men pause, sweat drenching their chests. “We need a pyre for this many bodies. We need to search for prisoners.” He means his wife, Danilla. The men nod and shift scarves over their faces against coffin flies and stench as they trudge off in search of surviving wood.

Athson braced himself against a tree. “Go away, father. You’re dead.” Fir limbs caressed his face and clothing as Athson marched into his camp. “Forget the past. They’re gone!” He kneeled and reached for the spit with a trembling hand.

The wind shifted and billowed smoke into his face. Athson choked, coughed, and turned his face from the smoke.

Ath scratches the dark bristles grown over his face during the days of troll-hunting since they set out from Depenburgh. “We take back Danilla and the others now. If the wizard arrives, we have no chance.” Athson’s father hisses plans to his seven comrades - huntsmen turned would-be rescuers. Bon-fires flicker along the Funnel where the trolls hold their prisoners at their altar. Ath fixes each man with his dark-eyed gaze.

Athson grabbed his head. “Go away, leave me alone!” His shout echoed through the forest, startling a dove. They were all gone, but he’d still never tell anyone.

Whispered plans meld into action as Athson’s father leads the other hunters toward the leaping troll-fires. Shouts and clanging steel announce the raid. Shadows weave among the blazes in the night wind. Fierce snarls answer angry shouts. Trussed prisoners wail for help.

Ominous silence interrupts the clash of weapons.

His father shouts. “Run, Athson, run!” The desperate command echoes in Athson’s memory.

Another voice laughs in mockery. “Run, Athson, run.”

Athson crouches and hugs himself. The fear and cold bite him into shivers.

Another man stands visible in the troll camp. His bald head glistens in the firelight while his hooked nose lends him a lingering sneer. “I’m Corgren. Come into my camp, boy, and I will welcome you. You will be safe. I can help you.”

Athson squeezed his eyelids, but the face remained. He would find the wizard—no, he couldn’t seek revenge. He wouldn’t even search. Athson hunched and gasped.

Athson wants to comply, wants a warm fire but hesitates.

"If you don't come, bad things will happen." Corgren waves trolls into the concealing heather.

The choice hangs in the air like meat smoking over a fire. Athson weighs his choices and almost shouts for his father.

"Run, Aths—" His father's voice cuts short in mid-shout with a muted grunt. The frightened boy trembles.

Trolls snort and tramp into the undergrowth.

Athson bolts into the night and falls into a crevice along the Funnel's rocky edge. Trolls miss him in the dark. The next day, Athson finds his father's broken sword in the abandoned camp.

Athson startled from his fit. He squatted among the trees, poised for dashing away as his escape from trolls faded. Athson's chest heaved. Sweat beaded his face and stained his tunic. He gripped handfuls of dirt and fir needles.

"You are safe in Auguron, among the elves. Heth and Cireena raised you. Mother, father, and the others died years ago. You have friends like Gweld who helped you." But he would never forget their names or their faces. Danilla. Ath. He exhaled raggedly. He hugged himself and rocked while he hummed a lullaby his mother sang when he still clung to her skirts.

He swore again. The bird hung unturned, scorching over the fire. He scrambled to his feet and rushed to his burning dinner.

Meat sizzled over the fire as Athson knelt and tended his meal. His trembling hands grew still over slow minutes. Memory-fits! They froze him like wounded prey. They were gone. Why now? Not the dead bird. The smoke? "There's no peace in western Auguron either. It's what I get for a good deed with that rabbit." He pulled an angry frown and threw a pebble into the fir trees.

Athson turned back to his fire. A two-toned dog sat by his pack, brown sides flexing with each pant. "Spark?"

The dog's pointed ears twitched at his name and his tail thumped the ground.

Athson squinted at the Mountain Hound's shiny black back. "Where've you been?" He knew the answer. He always saw Spark after a fit. "You're not real." But the dog comforted him. Still, it was bad when Spark appeared. Soul's-ease left the body too soon.

Athson sighed and rubbed the heels of his palms against his eyes. Calm returned, and he went back for his dropped armload of wood. He gathered what he could find as dusk faded to night. On returning to camp, he fed the fire and then from his pack pulled dried fruit brought to the ranger station from the trading post in Afratta days earlier.

He tore a leg off the pheasant and tasted hot meat, then offered some to Spark. As usual, the dog took nothing. Athson scratched the dog's ears and sighed. "Well even if you're not real it's still good to see you."

After eating, Athson built up the fire and warmed his hands against the chill sweeping inland from the Sea of Mists. The moon rose in the east, lighting the promontory named Eagle's Aerie, rumored home of a Withling. The pinnacle jutted into the sky above the surrounding fir trees, stretching north into the Sea of Mists' crashing breakers. He spied in the glow of moonlight the slender shadow of the endless stair stretching like an age-line along the cliff's face.

Gweld and other elven rangers had told him stories about Eagle's Aerie when word of Sarneth's assignment to Western Auguron got out. Tales spoken in the barracks hinted of hidden treasure and attempts to climb those stairs, but no one ever completed the task that Athson heard. Athson snorted. "Wild tales made up for my benefit."

Rangers told Athson that travelers reported an old woman of the mystic Withling order appeared in the area, lending aide or leading folks to dire ends. "And Withlings are good and wise agents of Eloch? Thanks for the fool's errand, Captain Sarneth." Athson tossed a stick into the fire with an irritated grimace and saluted the air. Sarneth either didn't trust Athson with more serious assignments or suspected him for some reason. How could Sarneth know more about him than Athson told or knew of his past?

At least Gweld was on the same duty. Athson would meet his oldest friend back at the ranger station in several days' time.

He muttered the elvish festival song, "Dance with the Moon." He smiled at the thought of elves dancing on a midsummer night and sighed as tension left his shoulders. Spark groaned in relief. Strange that he could hear the dog when nobody else did.

Athson yawned. Weariness gripped him soon after his memory-fits. Best not to fight sleep. He fed wood into the fire, pulled his blanket from his pack, and spread it over himself as he stretched out. Sleep soon covered him like a blanket, his thoughts of making a fir-limb shelter forgotten along with enigmatic Withlings and ten-year-old sorrows.

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He struggles to breathe. Trolls stab helpless villagers through sliding curtains of choking smoke and raging flame. Dying children wail as mocking slayers howl. The violence fades into darkness. He flails and fears he lies in a grave yet finds emptiness instead of dirt.

Silver light rises and Eagle's Aerie soars beneath the moon. Athson climbs the weather-worn stair

and scraps his hands as he gains speed. The rock-face blurs as Athson swoops onto the pinnacle towering over the ocean, stands where no one ever has, sees what has been hidden.

Athson pauses and then floats toward a voice murmuring by a swaying flame within a shadowed crevice.

A silhouette kneels and rocks, dark against the fire beyond it. A woman's uneven voice chants:

"The bow shall be hidden from heart..."

The swaying speaker feeds wood into the fire. Sparks snap from the coals and whirl amid the orange-blue tongues. An arc forms in the smoke and fades into the stars.

"The eagle will guide the heir..."

An eagle's scream pierces the night wind.

"The bow shall be found at need..."

Wrinkled hands tie a wad of cloth with string - a bowstring.

"And the arrow shall Eloch prepare."

A shooting star streaks across the horizon and drags Athson's attention from the crouching figure before the popping fire.

The eagle screams again - louder and nearer.

The figure half-turns and tosses the packet at Athson's feet. He stares at it, then back to the kneeling woman. Her face half-lit by the firelight reveals a pointy nose that overshadows her receding jaw. Grizzled wisps of gray hair wave in the wind. "For you who suffers in silence for a secret."

Athson stoops and inspects the package. He unties the knot and pushes the string into a pocket. Within the cloth he finds a tattered note and more fabric he guesses is a pennant.

"Zelma's done it." She gazes skyward and raises her arms.

"Why more now when so much has been taken already? Why me?" His anger flares and he tosses the packet away. "This isn't mine." He whirls and stumbles into darkness.

"He needs to see." The woman's voice screeches and slices through whistling wind.

The eagle's deafening scream stabs his awareness as immense wings snap like a clap of thunder. Talons tear clothing, pierce flesh and snatch Athson into the air. He dangles and kicks as he yells while silver landscape yawns beneath him. The curious sound of joyous cackling trails into the distance.

Athson squeezes his eyes shut but dares squinting at the moonlit sky that stretches overhead. The land wheels as the eagle glides over earth mottled by shadow and pale light. The world unfolds as Athson glimpses far beyond the distant Drelkhaz Mountains to the far eastern shores of the great Endless Sea.

His vision focuses on an old woman as she rests by her campfire on an empty plain south of Auguron. She stirs from sleep and cocks her head as if listening. She gazes at Athson. His vision whirls away from her as she rises in her gray dress.

A beautiful young woman rides along a road beneath tufts of glowing clouds. Her braided hair dangles over her left shoulder and she wears pale leather armor and leggings made for dueling. The hilts of two of swords protrude above each of her shoulders. She brushes her face as if wiping away a tear.

Darkness descends over both Athson and the eagle. The giant bird glides in silence.

A knife glitters pale in the darkness. It slashes in a vicious arc and then pauses. Blood covers the weapon and drips from the tip. Athson shouts in dismay but wind thrusts it back into his mouth. His own Rokan dagger bought in a fit of anger when Sarneth withheld his father's sword. The blood chills him worse than the wind or the eagle's hold.

The eagle's screech pierces his hearing and its wings drum thunder. Athson trembles as darkness recedes. The bracing wind slaps his face.

Shadowy wings ride wind from the south. The figure blots out stars as it swings north and glides on a shifting course. The eagle shrieks in defiance at the approaching beast. Fire belches amid an answering roar. Athson yells as the giant bird dives at the black shape. Ragged wings, so dark they drink moonlight, flutter against frigid air. Eagle and dragon glide and twist past each other.

The streaking shadow trails fire and a rotten stench. Athson struggles to name the creature until one thought flares: Magdronu.

The eagle dives. Athson flails his arms and legs as he screams.

And then the talons release him.

Trading Knives, Prequel 0.1 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Trading a knife costs a life. The offer of help may cost more.

Corgren more than holds his own in the prize fighting rings where skill with a knife is the only mercy he'll find. While an old enemy haunts his memory, new ones gather with each victory gained. Corgren's choices narrow. A stranger offers Corgren power for his service, tempting him with revenge for past wrongs. He considers the offer with doubt. Demands for a cut of his winnings squeezes his independence until a foe possibly more skilled and cunning than him enters the ring. Will he accept the offer at the cost of himself? **If you like**

fantasy with an edge, read Trading Knives where the action is as sharp as a knife.

What Is Needed, Prequel 0.2 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Prophecy is a knife in the dark, betrayal is the deepest of wounds.

Visions of destruction flock to Hastra. The mystic order of Withlings stands threatened with dark deeds. Betrayal festers within the order. Without any guidance, Hastra investigates who the source of the danger may be. But how much time does she have and who should she trust with her visions? Will saving the order cost Hastra more than she can pay?

If you like fantasy with an edge, read What Is Need where the betrayal is as deep as stab wound.

Grab a piece of destiny mingled with blood in this second prequel of The Bow of Hart Saga.

The Bow of Destiny, Book 1 of The Bow of Hart Saga, 2016 Book of the Year as named by Fantasia Reviews.

Haunted by his past. Hunted in the present. Uncertain what is real. Destiny might kill Athson before he finds the bow.

Athson suffered hallucinations ever since he was orphaned, including a dog no one else sees. The will in his possession, bestowed in a dream, can't be real. But the trolls now hunting him are. A destiny, both inconvenient and unavoidable, drags Athson into an unwanted quest that challenges all his assumptions.

Can he trust anyone?

Sworn to secrecy by his dead father about the bow, Athson wants nothing to do with it. A dragon and a wizard want the bow - and Athson dead. Running from the quest and his

destiny are tempting options.

Then he finds something unexpected. Will his discovery destroy him before he recovers the bow?

"The characters climb off the pages" of this award-winning epic fantasy with a fresh approach pitting a shapeshifting dragon against a hero haunted by prophesy and death. A quest for the fabled Bow of Hart drags Athson into danger between a dragon and a deadly wizard.

If you love classic fantasy with new ideas, read The Bow of Destiny because it's quietly addictive. Get it now.

An Arrow Against the Wind, Book 2 of The Bow of Hart Saga, 2017 Book of the Year as named by Fantasia Reviews.

Haunted by his past. Hunted in the present. Tossed like an arrow in the wind.

Athson discovered the unexpected during the search for The Bow of Hart. Yet the prophesied weapon remains hidden.

Mysteries discovered during the quest draw him deeper into the peril. The flames of vengeance surge in his thoughts with new revelations.

Can he escape the traps of his enemies?

The dragon's reach endangers even Athson's companions in unexpected ways. His enemy wants the bow but his mentor claims it must be used according to prophesy. With each turn of the search for the bow, long-hidden secrets surface and Athson must find the bow or risk losing those dear to him.

When the dragon gains leverage over him, Athson is torn between destiny and desire.

But Athson seeks his own path.

Will he falter like an arrow against the wind?

The hero of this award-winning edition of "an entertaining fantasy series in the classic quest adventure mold" defies a merciless wizard and a sly dragon. But Athson's on the hunt for more than destiny. His aim is tested between doom and vengeance.

Grab a piece of destiny now.

If you like epic fantasy, then you'll love An Arrow Against the Wind because the adventure spins like an arrow in flight.

The White Arrow, Book 3 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Bound to prophecy, his destiny balanced on an arrow's tip.

With the Bow of Hart in hand, Athson is hunted by his enemies. His mistakes haunt him as much as his past.

Magdronu plots to thwart the prophecy as his trolls attack Auguron City.

Hastra the Withling reveals Eloch will send an arrow for the bow. But when the arrow arrives, it is from an unexpected source and lands in unforeseen hands. Events twist like an arrow in flight…

Can Athson overcome his past and use the Bow of Hart as intended?

The archer and the bow await the coming arrow…

If you like epic fantasy read The White Arrow because it's a "fabulous conclusion…"

The climactic ending of this award-winning epic fantasy saga "twists and turns with stop in your tracks kind of moments." A dragon threatens Athson with an army of trolls. The mystic arrow for the Bow of Hart is endangered. Athson's destiny spins on the arrow's point.

Grab a piece of destiny now…

Find The Bow of Destiny here.

Find more information about the book at The Bow of Destiny FAQ and Information

Reader Guide: Excerpt from An Arrow Against the Wind, Book 2 of The Bow of Hart Saga

An Arrow Against the Wind
Book 2 of The Bow of Hart Saga
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Grab a piece of destiny now.

Excerpt

Days of pursuit slipped past Athson like a dream of eating, sleeping, and tracking. The trail into the Troll Heaths led him unerringly after Corgren and the Bane. Spark trailed Athson throughout the days of cold and lay near him in the dark, keeping him warm just as the dog had cared for him once he first escaped the Funnel years earlier. And now Athson stalked his enemy willingly back to the place of his losses, a journey of years he for which he sought an end.

The wind roared and buffeted Athson like attacking trolls when he crept through the pass above the Funnel. He crouched behind a screen of boulders with Spark. Below, the flat shelf of rock stretched to the sheer cliff edge above the river that swept swiftly. Corgren directed the Bane toward the Altar of the Trolls that hated stone where Corgren sacrificed to Magdronu. Limbreth lay limp in the Bane's hold. She must be alive. Athson shifted his gaze. Ath lay in a disheveled heap near the wizard.

Spark panted within Athson's reach. He strung the Bow of Hart. "I'll use it now." It must possess the necessary power to do what he needed now, just like his sword. The mountain hound panted, unmoving where he sat.

Athson peered out his hiding again. The worn path wandered onto the wide rock-shelf. That was no good. Corgren would see him. The rocky slope bent away south and turned toward the edge of the Funnel, cutting off the shelf. If only he could scramble among the boulders and attack at the closest point to Corgren.

He motioned Spark and worked his way among the rocks along the slope, his cloak pulled close for concealment. The high wind prevented any attempt at a long shot. But as he went, Athson spotted a high boulder near enough to the wizard. He might release an arrow from there with good result. This bow of prophecy must do the job. He had nothing else at hand to even his odds. He was the only one left to help Limbreth and his father. His stomach fluttered. The only one left.

Athson worked his way with care among the rocks. The constant rush of wind along the gorge covered any noise he caused. He crept down to the boulder close to Corgren. Ath lay twenty paces way. He might be asleep. Athson nocked an arrow.

Corgren whirled and gazed along the slope. "Come out, ranger. I know you're here." The wizard motioned to Limbreth where she lay on the altar by the Bane. "I have your woman. She'll die unless you give me the Bow of Hart."

The Bane brandished a wolf's-head dagger.

Athson gritted his teeth. It was like the one he carried, the one with which the Bane had murdered Heth and Cireena. A choice lay before him - the Bane or Corgren. If anything could kill that creature it was this bow. Either shot was a risk but taking down the Bane secured Limbreth. Athson ran his fingers along a feathered vane.

He rose in shadow from behind the boulder, drew the arrow and aimed for the Bane.

"Reveal yourself and turn it over. You have no choice unless you want her to die. Like your mother on that very rock." Corgren laughed.

Athson suppressed a scream. Heat flooded his veins. His heart pounded. Athson shifted his aim and released. At Corgren…

Find An Arrow Against the Wind here

Find more information about the book at An Arrow Against the Wind FAQ & Information

Reader Guide: Excerpt from The White Arrow, Book 3 of The Bow of Hart Saga

The White Arrow

Book 3 of The Bow of Hart Saga

"Twists and turns" with "stop in your tracks kind of moments." ★★★★★

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Excerpt

Apeth pushed himself to his feet, stepped around the fire and knelt before Athson. He touched Athson's head and whispered a word Athson never heard clearly though it echoed across his mind in a moment that passed like hours.

Wellness covered Athson in an instant like a raincoat donned in a sudden downpour of

rain. The cascade of sickness rolled from him and the fever fell away. His dizziness ceased and his vision snapped into clarity along with his thoughts. Weariness clattered from his limbs like loosened manacles from a prisoner. He gasped in delayed reaction to the Withling's healing.

Apeth Stellin withdrew across the fire and rolled his bedding. "I was wondering why I was withheld from healing you immediately. And now it's clear."

Athson stood and inhaled deeply. "Thanks for that but I don't follow your meaning."

"We need to move." Apeth pointed toward the cave entrance past the mule. "That wandering star is a sign. We aren't the only ones to have seen it. You can bet Magdronu is seeking the arrow because of the sign. North is our way, but choices lie ahead for you."

Athson shoved the last of his venison in his mouth and chewed. In his mind, there was but one choice. "I see one way ahead."

Apeth tugged at the brim of his hat and his blue-eyed gaze twinkled at Athson. "Oh, you have choices. What to do with the bow. Whether to finish this quest and find the arrow."With his arms spread wide, Athson lifted his gaze to the darkened cave roof rising above them. "Don't you see? There's no need for choices. Everyone's dead that matters to me. My father. Limbreth. My companions. I can only see my way to one thing now and that's bartering for my mother's freedom."

"That's a choice to let the curse on you continue to grasp your life, Athson, continue to let Magdronu's evil control you. You have a choice to stop it." Apeth stepped close again, his gaze intense but not threatening. "As for Limbreth, by your dream, I wouldn't assume anything about her fate. But there are choices ahead. Will you go as far as Marston's Station with me before you make your final choice about the bow?"

Athson nodded. "I'll go that far. I need supplies. But there's no other choice for me."

"Oh, but there is. Your dreams indicate something you must face." Apeth gathered his things and paused in front of Athson.

Athson crossed his arms. "What must I face?"

"That you are gifted to be a Withling, asked to serve Eloch with everything you've been given." The Withling strode toward the mule.

Athson's head spun anew but not from fever. Light from the wandering star glimmered in the entrance of the cave and lit the Bow of Hart where he'd left it near the mule. His anger burst in a sudden bellow, "No!"

Find The White Arrow here

Find more information about the book at The White Arrow FAQ and Information

Reader Guide: Series FAQ

What is the next book in The Bow of Hart Saga

You're looking for What Is Needed, Prequel #2 of The Bow of Hart Saga

Here's more about the book:

Prophecy is a knife in the dark, betrayal is the deepest of wounds.

Visions of destruction flock to Hastra. The mystic order of Withlings stands threatened with dark deeds. Betrayal festers within the order. Without any guidance, Hastra investigates who the source of the danger may be. But how much time does she have and who should she trust with her visions? Will saving the order cost Hastra more than she can pay?

If you like fantasy with an edge, read What Is Need where the betrayal is as deep as stab wound.

Grab a piece of destiny mingled with blood in this second prequel of The Bow of Hart Saga.

Books most like: The Sword of Shannara, Lord of the Rings and other classic, epic fantasy.

What is this series about?

The Bow of Hart Saga is an epic fantasy series with many elements of traditional fantasy books with some twists that don't necessarily head toward the end in the usual manner. As an epic fantasy, The Bow of Hart Saga is set in an alternate world named Denaria and involves

the use of magic, magical creatures, mystics, fantasy creatures and ethnicities, and weapons normal, magical, and mystical.

Are there more books coming?

Yes. I've taken a break from the world of Denaria to begin several new series set in different worlds. I'm currently working on another series but hope to begin work on the sequel series for The Bow of Hart Saga which will develop into a saga cycle as the plan has grown into a much larger project.

Where else can I find anything about The Bow of Hart Saga?

Audio and print are available. Print will soon be available for bookstores and libraries for purchase. Additionally, the Archer's Aim Press Store was recently started which offers a growing selection of merchandise (like t-shirts) based on the cover artwork. If you don't see merchandise you like, contact me because something is probably in the works.

How can I keep up with the progress of new books?

The best ways to keep up with the progress of new books by P. H. Solomon are:

Archer's Aim Digest newsletter subscription, or joining Marston's Station which is an exclusive Goodreads group for reading fans of P. H. Solomon (let me know if this one doesn't work because it expires every 30 days).

Other ways to connect with the author and support his writing career are through his merchandise store: https://archersaimpress.store

Or find all of P. H. Solomon's social media contacts in one source at Linktree.

Reader Guide: About the Author

I've always been a fantasy geek. Books by authors like Tolkien, McCaffrey, McKillip and more stoked my imagination on frosty winter nights as much as the fireplace warmed my limbs. Now I love writing my own fantasy tales. My imagination merges with my sense of everyday courage as I tell stories about characters challenged by life as they discover they matter. My background in anthropology mingles with my fantasy settings as my characters seek truth beyond their quests and adventures. Join me on the fantasy path and let's share a book at the fire.

Reader Guide: Other Books by the P. H. Solomon

The Cursed Mage Case Files:

The Changeling Incident (a prequel story)

The Order of the Dark Rose, Volume 1

Assassin's Dark Rose (a short misadventure) due out in early 2023

The Unseen Hand, Volume 2 (due out in early 2023)

The Nine Jewel Heist, Volume 3 (due out in the last half of 2023)

Doors of Fantasy Anthology Series

The Black Bag

Curses Dark and Foul

What Lies Beyond

Other Upcoming Series

Assassin's Black Glove

Treasure Stolen – Returned

The Broken Shield Chronicles

Heir of Hart (the sequel saga of The Bow of Hart Saga)

Author Connections:

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